

[EXTRACT FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES]

VICTORIAN ARTS CENTRE BILL

Explanatory Second Reading Speech

by

The Hon. NORMAN LACY, M.P.

MINISTER OF THE ARTS

in the Legislative Assembly on

21 November 1979



PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

Victorian Arts Centre Bill

Mr LACY (Minister of the Arts)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its main purpose is to provide for the appointment of a Victorian Arts Centre Trust in such a way that completion of construction of the performing arts sections of the Victorian Arts Centre is achieved without disruption, through an evolution process in which the new trust accepts its role of operator of the centre in a pattern of smooth progression.

Observation of the establishment of performing arts centres in other parts of Australia and throughout the world points to the wisdom of providing operating powers and the opportunity for specialist staff recruitment well in advance of the opening of the centres to the public. Those centres which have not followed this course have found to their bitter regret that it has taken some three or four years to learn to use their buildings to best advantage.

The trust will be the successor in law of the Victorian Arts Centre Building Committee in every respect. Its powers are so established to attract tax deductible gifts or bequests.

The buildings are being provided by the Government of Victoria for the leisure-time use of all the people at a time of pronounced social change and new thinking in the theatre and the entertainment industry generally.

It is the objective of the Government that the centre should be a place where performances can be presented as finely as anywhere in the world, and that these programmes will be complemented by a wide range of presentations which will relate in popular terms to the whole community.

Those responsible for the operations will be required to promote an atmosphere of lively, friendly enjoyment of leisure time by creating events of high quality of which we shall all be proud and which will give pleasure to people of all ages and of all interests.

The building of the National Gallery of Victoria which was completed in 1968 was the first stage of development of the Victorian Arts Centre. No one needs a reminder of its success. The move of the gallery collection from its former home in Swanston Street, shared with the State Library, the National Museum and the Science Museum, to the present building in St. Kilda Road, opened the way for increased enjoyment of the arts.

The success of the trustees of the gallery in caring for the collection, of providing exhibitions of its treasures and those of other galleries is known to all.

Because of the placement of the theatres, the Melbourne concert hall, the gallery and the Victorian College of the Arts side by side, the State of Victoria has an unparalleled opportunity and challenge to present total programmes in the arts which should encourage creative exchanges between the art forms, give inspiration to students of the arts and provide for the public an experience which few places in the world can match.

The proximity of the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, the siting of such extensive and beautiful gardens extending to the east and along the Yarra River, the availability of public transport and the placement of the centre in relation to the central business district of the city of Melbourne ensures the ready participation of the public in the wide range of events which will be conducted in the area south of the river.

To help achieve the links with the National Gallery of Victoria and the Victorian College of the Arts, thereby ensuring close liaison between both bodies having responsibility for major aspects of the Victorian Arts Centre, two members of the trust shall be appointed from members of the National Gallery trustees by nomination and one shall be appointed on the nomination of the Council of the Victorian College of the Arts. Provision is also made for representation of the trust of a member with an interest in the arts, who lives outside the city of Melbourne.

The Government is most appreciative of the energy and expertise and dedicated service given by present and past members of the building committee to the building of the arts centre. This truly magnificent project, the merits of which have been endorsed by all parties, will have the grateful thanks of future generations of citizens of Victoria.

The management of the centre will be directed towards the efficient achievement of artistic goals in St Kilda Road reaching out to the whole community. This will integrate with the State-wide policy of the Government expressed through the Ministry for the Arts, and will ensure that maximum advantage is taken of the magnificent facility which is being provided for citizens of and visitors to the State of Victoria. Well before opening, the artistic policy, which has been gestating and budding over a period of years, will have the chance to emerge and be tested.

Co-operation with other organizations, such as the performing companies who will be using the centre, will be an essential task of the new trust.

The general manager and other staff will be appointed by the trust with the approval of the Minister. This method of appointment will allow the trust the flexibility necessary to attract the best people to these positions.

Staff will be appointed on either a temporary or a permanent basis under appropriate awards or determinations

as circumstances warrant as a means of achieving high standards of excellence in the performing arts. In coming to its decision on staffing, the Government has had the benefit of consultation with operators of other centres, in particular the management of the Sydney Opera House and the Adelaide Festival Centre.

The theatre industry is a highly specialized field, and planning has involved co-operation between the public service board, the Ministry for the Arts and the office of industrial relations co-ordination. In drafting this Bill, detailed consideration has been given to the need to provide a framework of operations which will be efficient and businesslike.

This Bill provides the means to encourage revenue-producing activities and services such as car parking, catering, souvenir sales, ticket sales, and guided tours to be major contributors to the financing of operations. The building has been designed to last for centuries and to require minimum maintenance. Clearly, well-managed ancillary services will help further to minimize the need for subsidy.

Clause 4 provides for the establishment of a body corporate to be called the Victorian Arts Centre Trust. The functions of the trust as defined in Clause 5 are to complete the construction of the concert hall and theatres, to control and manage all parts of the centre except the National Gallery of Victoria, and to be responsible for the care, maintenance and improvement of all facilities on the Victorian Arts centre site.

Clause 6(1) provides the trust with the necessary general powers to enable it to perform its functions. These powers are more specifically detailed in clause 6 (2) under the following headings—

(a) Acquisition of any personal property for the centre.

(b) Granting of leases or licences to use any part of the centre.

(c) Ability to contract or make arrangements to improve facilities.

(d) Acquisition and installation of equipment.

(e) Acquisition of a liquor licence.

(f) Registration or purchase of inventions, copyrights, trademarks, patents, etc. and the ability to develop or dispose of these.

(g) Broad contractual ability for the operation of the centre.

(h) Installation, use and maintenance of broadcasting equipment and the ability to grant rights under terms, conditions and charges as determined by the trust.

(i) Control of the printing, reproduction or publishing of any material relevant to the functions of the trust.

The remaining paragraphs (j) to (o) provide the following powers of the trust—

Commissioning of theatrical works.

Purchase, operation or letting on hire of theatre, cinema or other equipment.

Establishment and operation of a performing arts museum and a music library.

Ability to lease any land to facilitate carrying out the functions of the trust.

Ability to seek and administer all forms of donations.

Clause 7 provides in particular that the trust may, with approval, subject to such terms and conditions imposed by the Treasurer, borrow moneys from any bank by way of overdraft and obtain temporary financial accommodation secured or arranged in such manner and for such period as approved by the Treasurer.

There is a mistake in the printed copies of the second-reading speech that have been circulated. The numbers should be moved forward by one.

Clauses 8 and 9 provide for, and state the terms and conditions of the appointment of nine members to the Victorian Arts Centre Trust by the Governor in Council to carry out the functions defined earlier in this Bill.

Clauses 10 to 13 enable the appointment of a chairman and deputy chairman and outline procedural matters in-

cluding the initial constitution of the trust.

Clause 14 enables the trust with the approval of the Minister to employ such persons as are necessary for the purposes of this Bill. Flexibility to engage the best creative personnel will therefore be available to the trust and it is expected that substantial economies will flow from this. The trust will be able to offer the advantages of the State Superannuation Scheme to appropriate officers.

Clause 15 enables officers of the Public Service to maintain existing benefits including superannuation should they be appointed officers of the trust.

Clauses 16 and 17 provide for the various financial recording and reporting aspects of the trust including the annual audit of accounts and the publishing of an annual report to be presented to the Parliament.

Provision is made in the schedule to repeal the whole of the following acts:

National Arts Gallery and Cultural Centre Act 1956,

National Gallery and Cultural (Amendment) Act 1959, and

Victorian Arts Centre Act 1971.

It is further provided that this Bill will be scheduled to the Ministry for the Arts Act 1972.

In framing this legislation the Government has been guided by its strong belief that the performing arts sections of the Victorian Arts Centre will be major contributors to the life of city dwellers and of visitors from regions throughout the State.

The Government's investment in the project to date has been substantial. Its commitment to it has been a strong one. This Bill provides a means of protecting that investment by establishing an operating style that is flexible, business-like and expressly designed for the needs of a major performing arts centre. The centre is not just a set of buildings.

The powers which this Bill confers on the trust and the responsibilities which members of the trust are called on to honour and observe will ensure that the buildings are used to their utmost. This centre will give talented Australian actors, musicians, singers and dancers the chance to perform before an ever widening audience. It will encourage innovation and new creative talent. It will inspire composers, playwrights, designers and choreographers to challenge performers to rise to even greater heights than have been achieved to date, and it will provide for the technicians in the theatre, arts equipment of such an advanced design that Victoria will be placed in the very forefront of world theatre for decades.

As well as support for local talent at the highest level, the provision of these high quality performance spaces will attract artists of international calibre to our State.

Already the Victorian Arts Centre is a member of a confederation which

links the major centres in each State of Australia. The completion of our centre and the one about to be constructed in Brisbane will provide a circuit of venues which will open wider horizons for the national and State performing companies and make it more possible for Australians to observe and enjoy the arts of Europe, America and Asia.

Provision of the Victorian Arts Centre is one of this Government's major achievements. It will be recognized not only next year or in the next decade, but also in the next century and beyond.

Already the buildings are attracting praise from right around the world for the way in which they provide for theatre patrons and artists alike. The sense of anticipation amongst performers and the public is strong. I can assure the House that anticipation will be well rewarded when the Melbourne concert hall opens in 1981 and the arts centre theatres open in 1982. I commend the Bill to the House.